



Questions and Answers from 28th & 29th April 2026

Thank you for taking the time to submit questions through the QR code both during and after our launch events. Below are the questions and answers which were raised. Where similar questions have been asked, these have been summarised into one reply and where a specific question has been asked about a particular school or situation, we have been in touch to respond directly, but where appropriate, also added in a generic version of the question and response to this document.

As more questions are received and responded to, these will be added to this document and shared.

1. What if the Governing Board is not in support of Academy Conversion

It is recognised that governors may have questions or wish to explore the implications of academy conversion in more detail. Governors serve their schools on behalf of the Archbishop and play an important role in supporting the shared vision and strategic direction of the Archdiocese.

The current strategy reflects the Archbishop's vision for Catholic education across the Archdiocese and is focused on the long-term strength, sustainability and collective flourishing of schools, rather than the circumstances of individual schools in isolation.

That said, the Archdiocese understands that schools are at different points in their journey. There may be reasons why a school feels it is not ready to move forward at a particular time, and these situations will be discussed openly and constructively. The Archdiocese is committed to working with governors and school leaders, listening carefully to any concerns, and providing opportunities for discussion to help clarify the rationale, address uncertainties and support confidence in the strategy as a whole.

2. How have individual schools been allocated into waves, particularly where some schools are already part of ecumenical parishes?

Wave allocations have been planned primarily around secondary schools, local geographical areas, and existing feeder-school relationships. This approach is intended to support effective working arrangements between schools and to ensure that schools are grouped in a way that allows for practical support and collaboration.



Archdiocese of Liverpool

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Allocations have not been based on parish boundaries, including ecumenical parish arrangements. It is recognised that parish relationships are important to schools and communities, but a range of factors needed to be taken into account when planning the waves.

If a school has concerns about its allocated wave, or feels there are specific circumstances that should be considered, the Archdiocese welcomes this feedback and encourages schools to get in touch to discuss their position. These conversations will be considered carefully alongside the wider strategy and programme planning.

3. Can schools communicate with staff, families and the wider community about the strategy?

Yes. Schools are welcome to share information with staff, families and other stakeholders once the strategy has been launched publicly. Schools may use the information made available through the published press release to support clear and consistent messaging. As part of the conversion process, each school will also hold a statutory consultation. This will provide staff, families and other stakeholders with further information about the proposal and a clear opportunity to ask questions, share their views and provide feedback before any decisions are confirmed. Consultation will be carried out in line with the wave in which each school is participating.

4. What will happen to the governing body when a school joins the CMAT? Can LA Governors remain in post?

When a school becomes an academy, the existing governing body will transfer into a Local Governing Body (LGB) within the Multi-Academy Trust. Governors are highly valued for their knowledge of the school, its community and its history, and the intention is that they continue to play an active role in supporting the headteacher and the life of the school.

Under the academy model, the role of governors does change. The Trust Board takes on greater responsibility for areas such as finance and HR which helps reduce the burden on governors, who are volunteers. This allows local governors to focus more clearly on school improvement, safeguarding, ethos and community engagement.

The specific powers and responsibilities of the Local Governing Body will be set out in the Scheme of Delegation, which is currently being finalised and will be shared and discussed with governing bodies in due course.

Local authority governor positions do not continue on an academy LGB. However, the Archdiocese is keen to ensure that individuals currently serving as local authority governors are able to continue contributing to the school, should they wish to do so, by being appointed to the LGB in an appropriate role in line with the Trust's governance arrangements.

5. How will the hubs be created? Will they be based on local authorities or geography, and who will lead them?

Hubs are intended to be formed primarily around geographical clusters of schools. This approach is designed to support strong local collaboration, shared practice and practical working arrangements between schools. The final hub model will be developed in partnership with the Trusts and schools, to ensure that the structure reflects local context and operates effectively.

Hubs will be introduced once Trusts reach a sufficient size to support this model sustainably. This phased approach ensures that hubs are well resourced and able to provide meaningful support to schools.

Hub leadership roles will be stand-alone positions within the Trust, rather than being held alongside a serving headteacher role. Serving headteachers and other senior leaders are welcome to apply for hub leader roles when these become available. Appointments will be made through a formal recruitment process, and hub leaders will be experienced Catholic senior leaders with the skills and capacity to support schools across the hub effectively.

6. Are all Catholic feeder schools included in the waves document, including joint faith schools?

Joint faith schools are jointly under the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Liverpool and the Diocese of Liverpool. As a result, these schools will join All Saints MAT as the joint-faith trust for their region, and are therefore reflected separately from the CMAT wave planning. Catholic primary feeder schools are solely under the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Liverpool and therefore will be allocated to a CMAT as part of the wave programme. If a school has questions or specific circumstances it would like to discuss in relation to its allocation or timing, it is encouraged to contact the Archdiocese, and these queries will be considered carefully.

7. What will the hubs look like, and can they be linked to the parish development strategy?

The development of hubs will be carried out in partnership with schools and CMATs, ensuring that the model is shaped by local context and experience. Hubs are intended to support collaboration between groups of nearby schools, providing a local structure for shared working, support and improvement.

As hubs are developed, careful consideration will be given to the parish development strategy. The Archdiocese is mindful of the important relationship between schools, parishes and local communities, and will ensure that hub arrangements complement and support parish development where possible.

The formation of hubs will therefore involve ongoing consultation with the parish development committee and Diocesan trustees, so that educational planning and parish strategy remain aligned.

8. How can you ensure job security for headteachers, given concerns about leaders losing their roles in some academy conversions?

When a school converts to academy status, all staff, including the headteacher, will transfer to the academy trust under TUPE arrangements. TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings – Protection of Employment) is a legal process that protects staff at the point of transfer, meaning existing roles, pay and terms and conditions transfer unchanged.

Academy conversion itself does not lead to job losses or changes to leadership roles. Any future changes would only take place following proper processes and consultation, and would not be a consequence of conversion alone. The intention of the Trust is to provide stability, support and development for school leaders, enabling them to continue leading their schools with confidence.

9. Is there any clarification on how budget deficits would be managed if a school moves into the CMAT?

The Archdiocese is working at a strategic level with the Trust to agree clear and consistent approaches to managing school finances as schools move into the CMAT.

Where a school has a deficit budget, the way this is managed will depend on the size and circumstances of the deficit. For smaller deficits, the Trust would review the level of risk and, if considered appropriate, take responsibility for the deficit as part of the conversion process. Larger deficits would require more detailed planning and discussion.

Importantly, schools will not be expected to manage this alone. There is a strong commitment to supporting schools ahead of conversion, including time to work on a Deficit Recovery Plan, understand the underlying causes of the deficit, and put appropriate actions in place. For some schools, this support will take place over a longer period to ensure they are in the strongest possible position before conversion.

10. Can a school delay its identified wave if governors feel it is not the right time?

It is recognised that schools are at different points in their journey. Where governors have concerns about timing, or feel there are specific circumstances that need to be considered, these should be raised as early as possible. Governors would need to formally communicate with the Archdiocese who, along with the Trusts, are committed to having open and constructive discussions with schools to understand their position and, where appropriate, consider whether a short delay would be beneficial.

Any decision about timing would be made carefully, taking into account the needs of the school, the wider strategy and the importance of progressing collectively. The focus

throughout is on ensuring that schools move forward at the right time and with the right support in place.

11. The current CMATs are relatively small at present. How can they remain effective as they grow?

The current CMATs have demonstrated a positive impact since their formation, and this experience has informed how the Archdiocese and Trusts are planning for future growth.

As the CMATs expand, they will not operate as a single, centralised organisation. Instead, growth will be supported through a local hub model, which has been designed to ensure schools continue to receive the individual attention and local support they need.

Under this model, schools will be grouped into local hubs based on geography and context. Each hub will bring together a smaller number of schools that work closely with one another, share expertise and receive targeted support. This approach allows schools to benefit from collaboration and shared practice, while retaining strong local relationships, identity and understanding of community needs.

The wider Trust structure will provide strategic oversight, shared services and specialist support, while the hub model ensures that school improvement, leadership support and partnership working remain local, responsive and manageable. This balance enables the Trusts to grow in a sustainable way, protecting what already works well and avoiding the risks associated with over-centralisation.

The Archdiocese has also recognised the need for additional capacity during this period of growth and has committed additional funding and support to help Trusts develop at the right pace. This investment, alongside the hub structure, is intended to ensure that effectiveness is not diluted as the Trusts grow, and that schools continue to receive high-quality, personalised support.

12. What academic evidence has influenced the Archbishop's approach to academisation?

The strategy is not based solely on academic outcomes. It is focused on securing the long-term future of Catholic education by ensuring schools are stable, well supported and not at risk.

The approach seeks to strengthen collaboration between schools, improve resilience, and create greater opportunities for staff and pupils. By working together at scale, schools are better placed to manage financial pressures, leadership challenges and reduced external support.

The expectation is that sustained academic success will follow from improved collaboration and a more secure operating environment, rather than being the sole driver of the strategy itself.

13. What will happen to schools that are already part of a CMAT but sit outside the Trust's future geographical area? Will they be moved?

Schools already in a CMAT but outside the Trust's long-term geographical area are not expected to move in the short term. Over time it is the intention to align schools with geographically coherent Trusts, but any change would be planned carefully, discussed with the school and Trust, and is not expected to happen for a number of years.

14. Will staff be subject to a change in terms and conditions?

No. If the school converts to academy status, all staff will transfer to the academy trust under TUPE arrangements (Transfer of Undertakings – Protection of Employment). TUPE is a legal process that protects staff at the point of transfer, meaning that existing pay, terms and conditions, and continuity of service transfer unchanged.

Academy conversion itself does not result in changes to contracts or conditions. Any future proposals that could affect terms and conditions would only be considered separately, following proper processes and consultation, and would not be a direct consequence of conversion.

15. How will roles within the new Trust be filled, and will there be opportunities for existing staff and headteachers as well as new appointments?

As the Trusts develop, there will be opportunities for individuals at different stages of their careers, both within schools and across the wider Trusts.

Opportunities will be open and transparent, and appointments will be made through fair processes that seek to identify the best candidates for each role. This includes opportunities for existing staff and school leaders who may wish to take on broader responsibilities, as well as opportunities for new appointments where additional expertise or capacity is needed.

16. What is the purpose of a Hub?

A hub is made up of a local cluster of schools to ensure that support is tailored to the needs of schools in their area. It provides a local structure within the Trust to strengthen collaboration while maintaining close links with communities.

Hubs also support staff development, enabling training and professional learning to take place locally and reducing the need for travel.

They offer regular opportunities for governors and school leaders to engage with an experienced Catholic senior leader, supporting leadership and governance.

The hub model is designed for Trusts of a substantial size and helps ensure that growth remains manageable and responsive.

As the model develops, feedback from schools and stakeholders will be welcomed to help shape the approach.

17. What top-slice can we be expect to be charged by the Trust and what does a school receive in return for the top-slice?

This is still being considered and worked through as part of the strategy planning process. It is expected to be in the region of 5% to 5.5% and will be the same for all schools in all CMATs

The top-slice funds a range of central and specialist services provided by the Trust to support schools and reduce the demands placed on school leaders. Many of these services are ones that schools would otherwise need to buy in separately, for example through service level agreements (SLAs) with external providers such as the local authority or other organisations.

Through the Trust, schools receive support across key areas such as finance, HR, ICT, governance, school improvement, safeguarding, and estates. The Trust also provides access to expertise in areas such as legal services.

By providing these services centrally, the Trust enables schools to benefit from shared expertise, consistency and economies of scale, while reducing duplication and the need for individual schools to manage multiple external contracts. This approach helps ensure that funding is used efficiently and that school leaders are well supported, allowing them to focus on what matters most: teaching, learning and the wellbeing of pupils.

Governors are encouraged to seek clarity on how the top-slice is used and the Trust is expected to be transparent about the value it provides.

The Archdiocese will work with the Trusts to ensure there is clear understanding and assurance that the top-slice represents good value for money.

18. What are the expected timescales for the different waves in the strategy?

The conversion programme will be delivered in a series of waves, providing a planned and manageable approach for both schools and the Trust.

For the existing CMATs, as a general guide, waves are expected to take place each academic year. Wave 1 conversions are planned to begin in the Autumn term of the 2026–27 academic year, with Wave 2 expected to follow from the Autumn term of the 2027–28 academic year, and subsequent waves scheduled in future years.

Within each wave, schools will be grouped and supported to convert at two or three points during the academic year, depending on the Trust's onboarding capacity. For example, a group of schools within Wave 1 may be scheduled to convert in the autumn term, with a further group converting later in the same academic year.

It is recognised that schools are at different stages of readiness. As a result, timescales may vary depending on the context and circumstances of individual schools, and some schools may require additional time before conversion can take place. There may also be overlap between waves, where planning and preparation for one wave continues alongside the start of the next, to ensure schools are supported appropriately.

For the new CMAT, the first wave is expected to begin in the 2027–28 academic year.

Overall, the wave structure is designed to be flexible and supportive, allowing schools to move forward with the right preparation, consultation and support in place. Further details will be shared with schools as plans continue to be developed.

19. How was the strategy developed, and how were decisions made about the number and size of the trusts?

The strategy builds on work that began in 2022 and is not entirely new. At that time, an initial programme of exploration, consultation and development took place, involving key stakeholders including headteachers, governors, the Department for Education, local authorities and the Archdiocese.

What is now being presented is a revised and refined version of that earlier work, taking into account changes in the national education landscape and learning gained over time.

Since Archbishop John's arrival, the strategy has been further developed under his leadership, working closely with the Archdiocesan Education Department.

The approach has been tested and shaped through targeted consultation and discussion with a representative group of stakeholders, including headteachers, Trust leaders (CEOs and CFOs), the Department for Education, members of the Archdiocesan Education Team and Chairs of Governors. The final strategy was approved by the Archdiocesan Trustees in February 2026.

Decisions about the number and size of trusts were informed by feedback from these consultations, engagement with other dioceses, discussions with the Department for Education, and observation of how other Multi-Academy Trusts are operating across the system.

National policy direction, including the recent white paper, has been clear in its expectation that schools work within larger, geographically-coherent trusts and in families of schools to support sustainability, collaboration and capacity. The strategy reflects that direction while seeking to apply it thoughtfully within the local Catholic context.

20. Will each Trust hold meetings with all Headteachers and Chairs of Governors to explain how their Trust operates?

Each Trust is committed to meeting with all Headteachers and Chairs of Governors to explain how the Trust operates. It is recognised that these conversations are important for every school, not only those joining in the initial waves.

Schools in Wave 1 have been invited, through their welcome letter, to request a meeting with the Trust. Schools in Waves 2, 3, 4 and 5 are encouraged to keep in contact with their CMAT if they wish to discuss their position in more detail. This approach ensures that schools can access information and dialogue at the right time for them, while allowing the overall programme to progress in a planned and supported way.

The Archdiocese will attend meetings where requested, to support discussion and provide additional clarity as needed.

21. Are the sizes of our future Trusts similar to those in other regions?

Across England, more than 50 MATs already operate with over 30 schools, and several dioceses are moving towards larger, geographically coherent Catholic trusts. In particular, the Archdiocese of Birmingham is creating five CMATs of 40–60+ schools, and the Diocese of Salford is developing three CMATs of similar scale. The Archdiocese of Westminster is also in the early stages of developing their trust growth journey for their 182 schools. These models reflect the Department for Education's direction of travel and the growing consensus that trusts operating at scale, with local hub structures, are better placed to support schools sustainably over the long term.

22. Can you provide greater clarity about governance arrangements at all levels?

Yes. Clear information about governance arrangements is important, and further detail will be shared shortly. The Trust's Scheme of Delegation is currently being finalised and will provide clarity on the different levels of governance, including the respective roles and responsibilities of the Trust Board, Local Governing Bodies and school leadership.

Meetings with Wave 1 schools are being arranged for the summer term, where governance arrangements and the Scheme of Delegation will be explained in more detail and questions can be discussed directly. Schools in later waves, or any school wishing to have an earlier conversation, are welcome to request a meeting with the Trust to discuss governance and operating arrangements in advance.

23. If my primary school is a feeder school for a Catholic high school in a different local authority, can consideration be given to joining the same Trust as that high school?

It is recognised that existing partnerships between primary schools and their local Catholic high schools are important and valued. Where schools work closely together, particularly

through established feeder arrangements, this can already provide strong continuity for pupils and families.

When planning the Trust structure and phasing, a range of factors have to be taken into account, including capacity, geography, balance across trusts, and the practicalities of supporting schools effectively through the conversion process. As a result, it may not always be possible for all primary and secondary schools to move into the same Trust or wave at the same time.

That said, the Archdiocese understands that individual schools may feel strongly about their existing relationships and future alignment. Where a governing body believes that being part of a different Trust or a different wave would better support the school and its pupils, they are encouraged to come and speak with the Archdiocese. These conversations are welcomed and will be considered carefully, alongside the wider diocesan strategy and the need to progress collectively.

24. Will sixth form colleges be part of the CMATs, and if so, how will this be managed?

Yes. Sixth form colleges will transfer into the CMATs as part of the overall strategy.

It is recognised that sixth form colleges have a different legal, operational and funding context from primary and secondary schools. As no other Catholic 6th Form has become an academy the sixth form colleges are being considered separately and carefully, outside of the currently published school conversion waves. This allows time to ensure that the right structures, governance arrangements, processes and support are put in place.

Further details about the timing and specific arrangements for sixth form colleges will be shared once this work has been completed, ensuring that any transition is well planned and sustainable.

25. Have High School Heads been consulted in which wave they are proposed to move over in?

Wave 1 school headteachers have all been spoken to in advance of the launch meeting. Individual conversations have not yet taken place with headteachers from other waves. Schools have been invited, through their welcome letter, to request a meeting with the Trust to initiate the conversations.

26. What happens to a school's reserves when it joins the CMAT?

When a school joins the CMAT, any reserves held by the school will, for accounting and regulatory purposes, be held within the Trust's overall reserves. This reflects Department for Education requirements for how academy trust finances are reported.

In practice, however, reserves are earmarked for the school that generated them. They are not absorbed into a general pot for unrelated use, and the Trust is committed to ensuring that schools continue to benefit from the funds they have built up.

Academy trusts are expected to ensure that public funds are used effectively to support pupils and school improvement. Where a school transfers with a significant surplus, there will be an expectation that these funds are actively invested in the school, rather than held without a clear purpose.

If reserves are above a reasonable threshold (for example, over 2% of budget), governors may be asked to explain how and when those funds will be used to benefit the school and its pupils.

27. Why has there not been a wider consultation with schools on this process?

The Archdiocese first began work on this strategy in 2022, at which point consultation and engagement with schools and other key stakeholders took place. Following that initial phase, progress was paused due to external factors, including the lack of available national funding to support implementation at that time.

The strategy has since been revisited and taken forward as part of a renewed and clear direction for Catholic education across the Archdiocese. This approach reflects the strategic leadership and vision for schools, alongside learning from earlier engagement, developments in the national context, and experience from other dioceses.

While the direction of travel has been set, the Archdiocese recognises the importance of ongoing conversation and dialogue. Schools are therefore encouraged to share any comments, questions or concerns, and the Archdiocese is happy to engage in further discussions with individual schools and governing bodies as the process continues.

28. What will happen to staff pensions when a school transfers into the CMAT?

Teachers' pension arrangements will not change as a result of joining the CMAT. Teachers will continue to remain members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme, and both employee and employer pension contributions will continue as normal. Membership of the scheme is protected and unaffected by academy conversion.

For non-teaching staff, pension arrangements will also be protected at the point of transfer under TUPE. Where staff are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), they will continue to have access to pension provision in line with statutory requirements.

In all cases, academy conversion does not result in staff losing pension rights, and continuity of pension arrangements is safeguarded by law.

29. The process of academisation will create additional workload for headteachers and leaders. Has this been considered, and what support will be available?

Yes. The additional workload associated with academisation has been given careful and deliberate consideration. Both the Archdiocese and the Trust recognise the pressures already faced by headteachers and senior leaders and are committed to supporting schools as fully as possible throughout the process.

Practical support will be provided to reduce the administrative burden on schools. This will include template consultation documents, guidance materials, and clear timelines to help schools plan and manage the process effectively. Due diligence information will be pre-populated wherever possible, using information already held by the Archdiocese or publicly available, so that schools are not required to duplicate work unnecessarily.

The Trust will work closely with each school during the conversion process, offering direct support, guidance and expertise to help navigate the required steps. The overall aim is to ensure that the process is well-managed and proportionate, allowing school leaders to remain focused on their core responsibility of leading teaching, learning and pupil wellbeing.

30. Will council employees currently working with schools transfer under TUPE, or will their workstreams be tendered by the MAT?

This will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, the general principle is that, where possible staff would transfer under TUPE, with their terms and conditions protected.

31. What does this mean for our current School Improvement Partner? Will their role continue under the new model?

School improvement and decisions on how this is delivered is a core responsibility of the Trust. Existing School Improvement Partners already work closely with the Archdiocese and the Trusts, and their contribution is valued and recognised.

Any decisions about continuing or adapting these arrangements will be made in consultation with the school and the Trust, with the aim of ensuring continuity, effective support and the best outcomes for schools.

32. Are leadership roles in the CMATs ring-fenced for practising Catholics?

Certain leadership roles within the CMATs are designated as practising Catholic posts, in order to safeguard and promote the Catholic character of the Trust and its schools. These roles include the Chief Executive Officer, Catholic Hub Leaders, Director of Catholic Life, and Lead Chaplain roles.

In addition, the majority of the Trust Board will be made up of foundation directors, who are practising Catholics appointed to ensure the Trust's Catholic ethos, mission and values are upheld.

Other leadership and operational roles within the Trust in line with their recruitment policies.

33. If we wanted to join sooner, what would happen if our primary feeder schools were not ready to do so?

This would not be a barrier to moving forward. Each situation would be considered through individual discussion and consultation, taking into account the circumstances of the school and its relationships.

Schools are encouraged to have an open conversation with the Archdiocese if they are interested in joining earlier, and these discussions are welcomed and supported.

34. What are the implications for Ofsted inspection windows when a school converts to an academy?

When a maintained school converts to academy status, it is issued a new Unique Reference Number (URN). For Ofsted purposes, this means the academy is treated as a new school, even though pupils, staff and leadership may remain the same.

As a result, the previous Ofsted inspection history does not automatically carry over to the new academy, and the inspection cycle starts again. Under current Ofsted guidance, new academies are usually inspected within three years of opening.

35. What is the split of student numbers between the respective trusts?

The split of student numbers in the original wave allocations is as follows:

PFCMAT – 20,638

SJCMAT – 28,025

OLOL – 26,702

Please note that these numbers are taken from publicly available datasets from October 2025 and could change as the waves and trust allocation are updated.

36. Will the different Trusts have similar or different average profiles of SEND, Disadvantage etc?

Based on the publicly available data from October 2025, the average profiles for schools currently included are as follows:

% FSM

PFCMAT - 22%

SJCMAT - 33.6%

OLOL - 29.3%

% SEN Support

PFCMAT - 13.5%

SJCMAT - 16.8%

OLOL - 16%

% EHCP

PFCMAT - 2.7%

SJCMAT - 3.75%

OLOL - 3.7%

Any variations between Trusts are reflective of local demographics rather than Trust structure.

Please note that this data is drawn from publicly available datasets from October 2025 and has not yet been verified directly with individual schools.

37. Will information about the CMATs and their core offer be available to schools?

Yes. Information about the CMATs and their core offer is available to schools. Details for Pope Francis CMAT and St Joseph CMAT can be found on their websites:

Pope Francis CMAT: <https://www.pfcmat.org/Joining-the-Trust/>

St Joseph CMAT: <https://sjcmat.co.uk/about-us/join-our-family-2/>

Schools are also able to request meetings with the Trusts to discuss their offer and ways of working in more detail.

Information about the Our Lady of Lourdes North West will be made available in due course as arrangements are finalised.